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LETTER DATED 20 JULY 1998 FROM THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF AZERBAIJAN TO THE UNITED NATIONS ADDRESSED TO THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

On instructions from my Government, I have the honour to transmit herewith the text of a statement adopted by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Azerbaijan on 18 July 1998 (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would have this letter and its annex circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) Eldar KOULIEV
Permanent Representative

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Annex

[Original: Russian]

Statement issued on 18 July 1998 by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Azerbaijan

On 14 and 15 July 1998, the Minister of Defence of the Russian Federation, Mr. I. Sergeev, heading a delegation of Russian military leaders, as well as high-ranking representatives of the concern Rossvooruzhenie, made a visit to Armenia.

Over the past few years, the heads of the Ministry of Defence of the Russian Federation have made regular visits to Armenia. Such visits reflect purposeful efforts to strengthen the military alliance between the Russian Federation and Armenia. Azerbaijan notes that this military alliance has continued to be strengthened even after the conclusion of the agreement on a ceasefire between Azerbaijan and Armenia in May 1994.

The current situation of "neither war nor peace" is a source of concern not only to Azerbaijan but also to the entire international community. In such circumstances, Baku followed the visit of the head of a Russian military agency to Armenia with intense concern, especially since, on the eve of the visit, the head of the Chief Administration for International Military Cooperation of the Ministry of Defence of the Russian Federation, Colonel-General L. Ivashov, in an interview assessed the situation in Transcaucasia as "alarming and dangerous".

Information about the visit gave rise to serious concern in Azerbaijan, which took note with particular anxiety of the officially declared outcome of the visit:

- coordination of plans for further cooperation in the military and military-technical sphere, with specific time limits and cost estimates for the implementation of such cooperation;

- improvement of the functioning of the Russian military base in Armenia and its cooperations with the Armenian armed forces, including refinement of unified anti-aircraft defence systems, with plans to equip those systems with S-300 anti-aircraft missile complexes;

- plans to deliver "modern weapons" to Armenia, including the re-equipping of the 102nd Russian military base;

- joint instruction, with the participation of the Minister of Defence, of Russian and Armenian servicemen at the military training ground in the environs of Erevan;

- plans to strengthen the Russian military group in Armenia by reducing Russian forces in Georgia.

The above-mentioned plans to strengthen the Russian-Armenian strategic military alliance through the implementation of the Agreement of 29 August 1997 between the Russian Federation and the Republic of Armenia on Friendship, Cooperation and Mutual Assistance, as well as 18 other bilateral agreements in the military-political and military-technical fields, are cause for Azerbaijan's well-founded concern and pose a serious threat to the peace process and a speedy settlement of the conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan.

In this connection, it should be recalled that the armed conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan has remained unsettled and, as a consequence of this lack of a settlement, more than 20 per cent of the territory of Azerbaijan is currently occupied by Armenian armed formations and over 1 million inhabitants of Azerbaijan have become refugees or displaced persons in their own country.

All this is well known in the Russian Federation, which, along with the United States of America and France, is one of the Co-Chairmen of the Minsk Conference of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and is empowered to settle the conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan. Moscow is well aware that the individuals guilty of making unlawful deliveries of more than $1 billion in Russian arms to Armenia have not been punished to this day. The facts about such deliveries were made public as a result of statements by a number of officials in the Russian Federation.

Azerbaijan has also noted that the Minister of Defence of the Russian Federation has awarded the medal 'For Strengthening Military Cooperation' to a number of Armenian military leaders who made tough statements concerning a settlement of the conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan. The decoration of those leaders took place against the background of protests by a number of States, including the Russian Federation, in connection with the aforementioned tough statements, which are not conducive to a settlement.

In the light of the foregoing, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Azerbaijan is authorized to express its deep concern at the plans to expand the military alliance between the Russian Federation and Armenia, the implementation of which is not conducive to a settlement of the conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan or to the achievement of peace and stability in Transcaucasia, and also tarnishes the Russian Federation's image as mediator.

The Ministry also considers that deliveries of arms from the Russian Federation to Armenia - both those that have taken place and those planned - are a gross violation of the OSCE Treaty.

Bearing in mind the foregoing, the Ministry, considering the mutual interests of all States in the region, calls upon the Russian Federation to reconsider its plans to broaden and strengthen its military alliance with Armenia until the conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan is settled.